

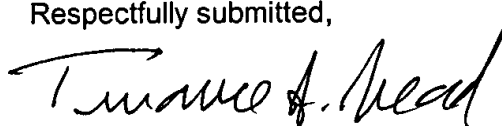
REMARKS

Claims 1-33 have been cancelled. Claim 34 has been amended to broaden its scope. Claims 35-71 have been added to extend claim coverage to subject matter not included in the originally-filed claims. Claims 34-71 remain in the application.

A recent CAFC decision Augustine Medical, Inc. v. Gaymar Industries, Inc., 50 USPQ2d 1900 (CAFC 1999) concerns patents owned by the applicant and has been included with the Information Disclosure Statement submitted with this response. In this decision, the CAFC limits the inflatable thermal blankets claimed in those patents to thermal blankets which are self-erecting. The applicant in the present application has specified in the claims "an inflatable device" or "an inflatable cover". These terms are expressly intended to be broader than the terms used in the patents addressed by the CAFC decision and to ensure that the inflatable devices and covers claimed in the present application are not limited to self erecting inflatable thermal blankets.

This Preliminary Amendment is submitted in advance of the first examination of the subject application. No new matter has been entered.

Respectfully submitted,



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34. (Amended) A method for controlling airflow through an inflatable [thermal blanket] device having two or more inlet [parts] ports for admitting [the] airflow into the [blanket] device, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a plug having a central body [diameter substantially as large as an inside diameter of the inlet part] and a plurality of extensions which are coplanar with and extend [beyond] from the central body;

introducing an airflow into the device [inflatable thermal blanket] through a first inlet port [part]; and

restricting egress of the airflow through a second inlet port by placing the plug in [over] the second inlet port and retaining the plug in [over] the second inlet port [part] by inserting at least two of the plurality of extensions into the second inlet port.

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